Lease/Rental Scene

GM ORDERED TO TREAT RENTAL FIRMS EVENLY

A Federal Trade Commission Judge, James P. Timony, has made an initial ruling that General Motors illegally discriminated against small car-rental firms by giving them smaller advertising subsidies than it gave to larger ones. GM was ordered to provide even treatment under the judge's order, and it must advertise its advertising program in at least two publications for five years.

According to findings in the initial decision, in 1978 GM favored 15 rental and leasing firms and even among those did not make proportionally equal advertising payments. GM now will have to make payments available on proportionally equal terms to all competing rental and leasing firms.

The judge's order can be reviewed by the five FTC commissioners on either their own initiative or on appeal. If neither occurs, the judge's initial decision becomes final within 30 days. According to reports, however, GM is reviewing the decision and expects to appeal it.

Ford Motor Company also has more than a passing interest in the outcome of the case, since it lost a similar decision last June. According to the stipulations of that decision, however, Ford is not bound to its decision if GM's litigation results in a better one. Ford, therefore, can challenge the initial decision against GM if it is dissatisfied.

ELMHURST OPENS NEW GROUP HEADQUARTERS

Elmhurst Leasing has opened a new headquarters in the Chicagoland area, at 896 N. York in Elmhurst, IL. The new building, which is two-story with 4,400 square feet of office space and an additional 2,900 square feet of service area, is centrally located to serve as group headquarters as well as an operating branch.

Elmhurst has future plans to add an additional two or three outlets in the same general location in the near future.

THRIFTY TO FEATURE CHRYSLERS

Thrifty Rent-A-Car has become the first major car rental firm to show a strong commitment to Chrysler products. The firm recently came to an agreement with Chrysler to feature their automobiles. According to reports, more than 50 percent of Thrifty's 1984 acquisitions were Chryslers, and the long term goal of the firm is that 50 percent of their total fleet will consist of Chryslers. The intent of the program, from Chrysler's point of view, will be to promote Chrysler test drives through Thrifty Rent-A-Car.

BILL MIGHT PROTECT AGAINST TEFRA BACK TAX

The House Ways and Means Committee approved a bill last October that could protect auto dealers if the IRS seeks back taxes on commercial open-end leases.

The bill, which offers technical corrections to various classes in the Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act (TEFRA) of 1982, also would allow lessees in a commercial lease to treat the lease as a conditional sale on a tax return filed prior to the act's passage, despite the existence of a terminal rental adjustment clause.

When TEFRA was passed, it stipulated that an open-end commercial auto lease must be considered a lease for tax purposes.

GECAL TO TEST USED CAR CENTERS

General Electric Credit Auto Leasing (GECAL) will test pilot two wholesale used car centers in the South reportedly to dispose of off-lease, early termination, and repossessed leased vehicles. It is reported that as many as 50 to 100 cars a month could flow through the Dallas and Atlanta outlets that GECAL is in the process of establishing. The vehicle mix is expected to be evenly divided between domestic and foreign cars at the wholesale lots coming out of service from GECALs existing fleets in the Southeast and Southwest regions.

HERTZ SETS RECORD FLEET ORDERS

Hertz Corp. has placed orders with auto manufacturers for a record 153,840 1984 cars, bearing an estimated value of over $1 billion. The buy is the largest in Hertz history and will be absorbed by Hertz' more than 3,000 corporate and franchise locations nationwide.

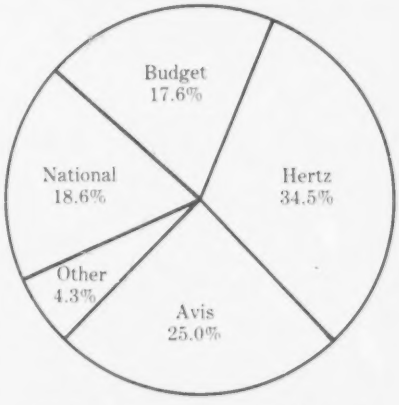
The new purchases are 26 percent ahead of the previous record of 122,095 orders for 1980 models and nearly 40 percent more than last year's total. Orders include 93.8 percent domestic models and 6.2 percent imports. The import share is down sharply from 9.9 percent in 1983.

Hertz said the record purchase orders reflect an upward trend in both business and personal car rentals since March 1983.

U.S. Daily Rental Airport Market Share

Top 100 Airports

(where four majors operate)



Total Revenue (000s)

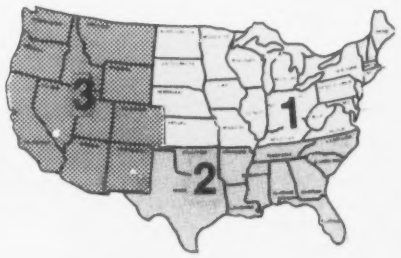
$153,160.757

September 1983

Source: Budget Rent-a-Car Research Dept.

Used Cars

The following are average car prices for the period ending October 26, 1983. Prices are based on wholesale activity at major dealer auctions across the country. They are divided into three zones as indicated on the accompanying map. These averages are calculated electronically on IBM machines. They are based on clean cars only. Proper allowance should be made for upgrading sharp cars and proper deduction taken for fair cars. Automatic transmissions have been included in the averages of all models. This information is published in *Automotive Fleet* by special permission of Automotive Market Report.



Model	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone3
82 AMC CONCORD			
Sdn 6-4	4403	4450	4359
Sta Wgn 30	4631	4675	4584
81 AMC CONCORD			
Sdn 6-4 Dr	3558	3595	3523
Sta Wgn	3746	3784	3707
82 BUICK SKYLARK			
Sdn	5338	5392	5285
81 BUICK SKYLARK			
Sdn	4342	4383	4297
82 BUICK REGAL			
Turbo Cpe	7204	7275	7133
Cpe	6951	7001	6862
81 BUICK REGAL			
Turbo Cpe	6308	6373	6244
Cpe	6027	6091	5968
82 BUICK LESABRE			
Sdn	7645	7719	7568
81 BUICK LESABRE			
Sdn	5969	6030	5910
82 CADILLAC			
Cpe DeVille	11998	12118	11881
Sdn DeVille	11926	12044	11810
81 CADILLAC			
Cpe DeVille	9452	9546	9358
Sdn DeVille	9389	9487	9299
82 CHEVY			
Chvt Htchbk	3408	3441	3373
Camaro Cpe8	9469	9562	9374
81 CHEVY			
Chvt Htchbk	2835	2863	2807
Camaro Cpe 8	7223	7296	7154
82 CHEVY CITATION			
Cpe 6	4360	4401	4316
81 CHEVY CITATION			
Cpe 6 Htchbk	3610	3644	3570
82 CHEVY MALIBU			
Sdn	5994	6052	5933
81 CHEVY MALIBU			
Cpe	4638	4682	4591
Sdn	4557	4604	4511
Clas Cpe	4960	5010	4908
82 CHEVY MONTE CARLO			
Cpe	6509	6578	6448
81 CHEVY MONTE CARLO			
Cpe	5777	5835	5715
82 CHEVY IMPALA			
Sdn	6688	6657	6525
Imp Wgn 9	6848	6917	6779
81 CHEVY IMPALA			
Sdn	5224	5278	5172
Cpe	5248	5301	5199
Est Wgn 9	5442	5495	5389
82 CHRYSLER			
LeBaron Sdn	6200	6263	6141
81 CHRYSLER			
Npt Sdn	5449	5497	5392

Model	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone3
82 DODGE OMNI MISER			
4 Dr Htchbk	3711	3748	3673
81 DODGE OMNI MISER			
4 Dr Htchbk	2898	2928	2868
82 DODGE ARIES			
Cpe	4984	5035	4934
81 DODGE ARIES			
Sdn	4303	4345	4260
82 DODGE DIPLOMAT			
Sln Sdn	5346	5400	5294
81DODGE DIPLOMAT			
Sln Cpe	4406	4446	4359
Sln Sdn	4406	4446	4359
82 FORD FAIRMONT			
Futura Sdn 4Dr	4706	4753	4662
81 FORD FAIRMONT			
Sdn 4 Dr	3635	3672	3598
82 FORD MUSTANG			
Cpe 4	4718	4766	4672
81 FORD MUSTANG			
Cpe 4	3973	4010	3933
82 FORD GRANADA			
Sdn 6-L	5375	5428	5320
81 FORD GRANADA			
Sdn 8-L	4333	4378	4290
82 FORD LTD			
Sdn	6823	6892	6756
81 FORD LTD			
Sdn	5434	5485	5379
81 FORD ESCORT			
Sdn 4 Dr	3193	3224	3162
82 FORD CROWN VIC			
Sdn	7667	7744	7591
81 FORD CROWN VIC			
Sdn	6126	6186	6063
82 FORD THUNDERBIRD			
Cpe	6577	6644	6511
81 FORD THUNDERBIRD			
Cpe	5671	5730	5618
82 LINCOLN CONTINENTAL			
Sdn	13429	13563	13296
Mark VI Sdn	13341	13473	13206
81 LINCOLN CONTINENTAL			
Sdn	9413	9510	9318
Mark VI Sdn	11323	11438	11209
82 MERCURY COUGAR			
GS Cpe	5420	5474	5366
Sdn	5420	5474	5366
81 MERCURY COUGAR			
Cpe	4371	4417	4328
Sdn	4371	4417	4328
81 MERCURY ZEPHYR			
Sdn 2 Dr	3668	3705	3633
82 MERCURY LYNX			
HthBk 3-Dr	3863	3899	3822

Model	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone3
82 MERCURY MARQUIS			
Sdn	7193	7263	7122
81 MERCURY MARQUIS			
Sdn	**5818**	**5873**	**5760**
Wgn-2	**5944**	**6005**	**5883**
82 OLDS CIERA			
Cpe	6422	6490	6359
Sdn	6511	6580	6448
82 OLDS CUTLASS SUPREME			
Cpe	6931	7001	6862
Sdn	6665	6732	6601
81 OLDS CUTLASS			
Sdn	5654	5709	5595
Sup Cpe	6027	6091	5968
82 OLDS DELTA 8			
Sdn	7405	7478	7331
81 PLYMOUTH HORIZON MISER			
4 Dr Htchbk	2899	2929	2869
82 PLYMOUTH RELIANT			
Cpe	4959	5008	4909
81 PLYMOUTH RELIANT			
Cpe	4282	4326	4237
81 PONTIAC FIREBIRD			
Cpe 8	7636	7708	7557
81 PONTIAC LEMANS			
Cpe 8	4847	4893	4797
82 PONTIAC PHOENIX			
Cpe	5148	5200	5098
Htchbk Sdn	5148	5200	5098
81 PONTIAC PHOENIX			
Cpe 6	4166	4207	4124
81 PONTIAC CATALINA			
Sdn	5480	5533	5427
Bonneville Sdn	6049	6106	5986
82 VOLKSWAGEN RABBIT			
2 Dr Htchbk	4157	4198	4115
81 VOLKSWAGEN RABBIT			
2-Dr HtchBk	3361	3395	3327
IMPORTS			
82 DATSUN			
210 2 Dr	3548	3583	3512
Sentra 2 Dr	3871	3908	3832
Stanza Htchbk	4934	4984	4885
81 DATSUN			
210 Std 2 Dr	2934	2963	2906
510 2 Dr	3798	3835	3760
810 Sdn 4 Dr	5750	5808	5692
82 TOYOTA			
Corolla 2 Dr	4514	4559	4469
Celica St	5685	5741	5628
Corona Sdn Lux	5956	6016	5896
81 TOYOTA			
Corolla 2 Dr Sdn 4Sp	3180	3212	3148
Celica St Spt Cpe	4428	4473	4384
Corona Sdn 4 Dr	4123	4165	4083

McCullagh's New Plan
Fleet Manager Overview
L.A. Olympic Rentals

a bobit publication

january 1984

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Leasing/Rental Issue

January 1984 Vol. 23, No. 3

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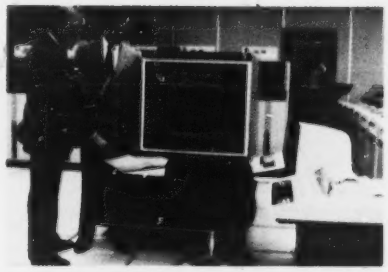

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On our cover: An artist's rendering shows the support facilities standing behind McCullagh's car leasing operations.

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Calendar

JANUARY 1984

14-19 — Budget Rent A Car Licensee Convention, Scottsdale, AZ.

26-29 — American Car Rental Association, Canyon Hotel, Palm Springs, CA.

30-31 — *Leasing Digest* Conference on Lessee-Lessor Relationships; Residual Valve Insurance, Plaza Hotel, New York, N.Y.

31-Feb. 2 — NAFA Basic Principles of Fleet Management, Orlando, FL.

FEBRUARY

1-5 — Truck Rental and Leasing Association, Fairmont, San Francisco, CA.

4-7 — National Automobile Dealers Association, Dallas, TX.

MARCH

4-8 — American Automotive Leasing Association Convention, Doral Country Club, Miami, FL.

16-18 — Automotive Fleet and Leasing Association Convention, Sheraton Grande, Los Angeles, CA.

18-21 — National Association of Fleet Administrators, Bonaventure Hotel, Los Angeles, CA.

19-22 — Motor Vehicle Maintenance Conference, Univ. of Washington, Seattle, WA.

21-24 — National Truck Equipment Association, Convention Center, Baltimore, MD.

APRIL

1-4 — National Car Rental Licencees, Orlando, FL.

12-14 — National Association of Van Pool Operators, Regency Hotel, Dallas, TX.

Gas Prices

UNLEADED

City	Full-Serve	Self-Serve
Albany, GA	124.2	122.9
Fort Meyers, FL	136.9	117.4
Champaign, IL	155.6	128.2
Witchita, KS	137.2	114.2
New Orleans, LA	137.7	115.7
Flint, MI	155.9	122.4
St. Charles, MO	137.4	113.4
Fort Worth, TX	139.2	111.2
Billingham, WA	148.9	131.9
Milwaukee, WI	136.7	119.3
Los Angeles, CA	144.6	118.5
Denver, CO	143.5	120.3
Stamford, CT	133.6	125.7
Brooklyn, NY	133.7	132.7
Cincinnati, OH	143.1	120.7

Survey conducted during the first five working days of December, 1983. Supplied by Runzheimer and Company, Inc. Runzheimer Park, Rochester, WI.

Fleet Managers and Their Environment

By Barry Mitnick
and Donna J. Wood

It is perhaps among the folklore of modern fleet management that fleet managers work in an increasingly complex work environment, are appreciated relatively less by their peers than other managers, seem to have come a long way toward professionalism, and find it increasingly necessary to use a wider range of techniques and services, such as those often provided by fleet leasing companies. The NAFA Survey Project at the University of Pittsburgh, funded under a grant from the NAFA Foundation, has sought to examine these and other observations about the environment of fleet management that seems to prevail.

Even if the folklore proves valid, we still do not understand the key details and dynamics of these important features of everyday fleet management. How complex is fleet management perceived to be? Do fleet managers really feel underappreciated by their management peers? Do they perceive, however, that top management understands their situation? Is the professionalism of fleet managers similar to that exhibited in other true professions? How dependent are fleet managers on services provided by fleet leasing companies? Are fleet managers satisfied with the ser-

Table I
Characteristics of Respondent Managers

Manager's Sex	N	%	Nationality	N	%
Male	152	76.0	U.S.	171	89.5
Female	47	23.5	Canadian	20	10.5
Total	**199**		**Total**	**199**	

Manager's Age	N	%	Manager's Salary	N	%
25 years or less	4	2.0	15-19,999	16	8.4
26-30	21	10.7	20-24,999	20	10.5
31-35	30	15.3	25-29,999	41	21.5
36-40	30	15.3	30-34,999	41	21.5
41-45	24	12.2	35,39,999	27	14.1
46-50	23	11.7	40-49,999	24	12.6
51-55	26	13.3	45-49,999	8	4.2
56-60	21	10.7	50,000 +	14	7.3
61+	17	8.7		—	
Total	**196**		**Total**	**191**	

"Fleet managers inhabit boundary-spanning roles."

vices they get from such companies?

Only through an understanding of the particular environment of fleet management can we move toward the development of better managerial tools for the area. If we understand how fleet managers in general interact with their environment, we can, conceivably, prescribe improvements useful not just in one, but in many organizational settings. We may discover, for example, that only a few parts of a complex environment actually produce the most problems; this can lead us to focus remedial action in this area. Or if fleet management is indeed taking the path followed by other professions, we can apply what has been learned about the behavior and management of professionals to improve the situation of fleet personnel.

Fleet managers inhabit what organization theorists call "boundary-spanning roles"; they, like purchasing agents, sales personnel, and public affairs specialists, among others, conduct the organization's relationships with the components of its environment. This is a key organizational role that has received a great deal of recent attention in the academic literature. If fleet managers act, like other boundary-spanning personnel, as important agents of the organization, we can learn a lot relevant to management in the area from looking explicitly at how they fulfill this role. Our questionnaire, therefore, was designed specifically around the concept that much can be learned from thinking about the ways in which fleet managers act as boundary-spanning agents.

The Survey

A questionnaire designed to explore the topics discussed above was sent to half the membership of the National Association of Fleet Administrators in the spring of 1983. The sample was selected from NAFA's mailing list, with 666 questionnaires sent to every other name on the list (beginning with a flip of a coin). The questionnaire was long and complex, with over 400 "variables" (i.e., response blanks). In spite of this, we received 200 responses, or 30 percent. This is considered a high rate of return for a single mailing of this type and itself probably reflects a dimension of professionalism among the respondents. We are very grateful to the respondents for their work. We are reporting here some results from a tabulation of the frequency distributions (i.e., percentages) of the responses. The results of more complex statistical analyses performed on the data will be reported in future papers.

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"Salaries ranged from $15,000 to $50,000. . ."

A Snapshot of Fleet Managers

The 200 respondents represented organizations ranging in size from 13 to 325,000 employees, with a median size of 3,000 employees. Private sector organizations composed 77.5 percent of the sample, with government agencies (national, state, and local), not-for-profit agencies, and educational institutions represented among the remainder of the sample. Fleets similarly displayed a wide range, with the median number of automobiles at 270 (range 15 to 7,200) and of trucks and other vehicles at 110 (range zero to 19,000). Organizational size as measured by last year's sales (or budget, for nonprofit agencies) ranged from less than $1 million to over $5 billion, with the median falling at almost $250 million.

Respondents themselves were 76 percent male (N = 152). Of the 191 respondents who reported nationality, 89.5 percent were located in the United States and 10.5 percent in Canada. Respondent fleet managers ranged in age from under 25 years (only 2 percent) to over 61 years (8.7 percent), with a median age category (among 196 reporting) of 41 to 45 years. Salaries ranged from $15,000 to over $50,000, reflecting the vast array of managerial titles and positions accounting for the fleet management function in respondent organizations. Frequency distributions for some of the fleet managers' personal characteristics are shown.

The Internal and External Constituencies of Fleet Managers

To understand the sources of complexity in the environment of fleet management, we need to identify the parts of that environment and how they relate to fleet managers. The questionnaire listed 18 internal constituencies (e.g., accounting, sales) and 20 external constituencies (e.g., auto dealers, fleet leasing companies). It asked respondents about the perceived frequency of constituencies.

As we would expect, fleet managers do not interact with, experience problems from, or perceive the importance of (or change in the importance of) each constituency equally. Relatively few constituencies in each case proved to be key ones.

Who do fleet managers interact with most inside their organization?

Of the 18 internal constituencies listed on the questionnaire, fleet managers reported five cases in which contacts were "frequent" or "very frequent" in 40 percent or more of the sample. These constituencies were purchasing, sales/marketing, accounting, finance/treasurer, and vehicle maintenance. Most often reported were contacts with accounting (70.3 percent). Insurance, claims, personnel, operations/production, president/CEO, and the general manager were in

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"20 to 24 percent perceive their importance to have increased."

frequent contact with a substantial minority of respondents (23.7 to 34.1 percent). Least frequently reported were contacts with internal security, engineering, public relations/public affairs, support services, Board of Directors, government relations, and general counsel (range 1.2 percent to 18.5 percent).

Which are considered the most important constituencies of fleet managers within the organization, and which constituencies are thought to have changed in importance recently?

Over half of the respondents rated the following internal constituencies as important or very important: accounting (61.3 percent), finance/treasurer (54.5 percent), President/CEO (60.5 percent), general manager (53.4 percent) and vehicle maintenance (64.6 percent). Government relations and public relations/public affairs were seen as having relatively little importance to fleet management functions, and the other internal constituencies were rated as important by a moderate number of respondents. Interestingly, only vehicle maintenance was seen as having increased substantially in importance over the past 10 years (41.8 percent of respondents). Most of the other internal constituencies seem more important now to only a relatively small proportion of respondents, and few fleet managers perceive that any of these constituencies have declined in importance over time.

Who do fleet managers interact with most outside their organization?

It is not surprising that the external constituencies with which fleet managers are most involved are precisely those most closely connected to vehicle sales and services. Over half the sample reported frequent or very frequent contact with a fleet leasing company (60 percent), auto manufacturers (52.3 percent), and auto dealers (51.8 percent). These were followed closely by contract mechanics (44.8 percent), NAFA (38.9 percent), parts vendors (36.3 percent), and insurance companies (32.8 percent). Most fleet managers report having little or no contact with public utility commissions, unions, or governmental revenue departments. An interesting finding here is that over half of respondent fleet managers reported frequent or occasional contact with local, state, or federal regulatory agencies (including transportation departments). It is becoming commonplace in business that government relations is now a generic management function, not a specialized staff function; this finding offers support for the wisdom of this approach.

Who are the most frequent sources of trouble for fleet managers from outside the organization?

Most of the external constituencies listed are occasionally sources of trouble for fleet managers, but none seems to present overwhelmingly frequent difficulties. Those constituencies with the highest frequency of contact are also those most often rated as frequent sources of problems: contract mechanics (27.2 percent), auto dealers (26.9 percent), auto manufacturers (26.4 percent), and fleet leasing companies (22.7 percent). Although almost 40 percent of respondents are in frequent contact with the National Association of Fleet Administrators, it was reported as a frequent source of problems by only seven individuals (3.6 percent — computerized mailing list snafus, perhaps).

Who are considered the most important constituencies of fleet managers outside the organization, and which constituencies are thought to have changed in importance recently?

Over half the sample considered the following external constituencies to be important or very important to satisfactory performance of the fleet management function: auto manufacturers, auto dealers, fleet leasing companies, contract mechanic, and insurance companies. Parts vendors and NAFA are considered to be important by more than 40 percent of the respondents.

Four constituencies were rated as having increased in importance over time by a large minority of respondents: fleet leasing companies (38.5 percent), NAFA (38.2 percent), auto manufacturers (38.1 percent), and auto dealers (29.2 percent). Contract mechanics, parts vendors, fuel suppliers, and insurance companies were not far behind, with about 20 to 24 percent of the sample perceiving their importance to have increased over 10 years.

The results suggest an interesting hypothesis about complexity in the fleet manager's environment. If the environment of fleet management has grown more complex and more difficult to manage, perhaps it is not because new constituencies have joined the field — as is often the case with other managerial specialties — but because *relations* with traditional constituencies have themselves become more complicated.

Perceptions of Complexity and the Relationship of Fleet Managers to Their Organizations

Besides asking fleet managers directly about their interaction frequency, problem source dependence, and change of perceptions with respect to particular internal and external constituencies, the questionnaire also inquired about some general qualities of the fleet managers' relationships to their organizations. Respondents were asked to agree/disagree with a series of attitudinal statements. These concerned complexity and change in the job and the environment, the importance and status of the job of fleet management within the organization, and other aspects that we shall address later.

Complexity in the environment is defined in may ways by organizational researchers. We have defined it in terms of the number of internal and external constituencies in the fleet manager's environment, the frequency of interaction with constituencies, turbulence in the environment (i.e., the number and rapidity of changes in the environment), and certain aspects of the quality of interactions with the en-

". . .fleet managers perceive their environment as turbulent."

vironment. Greater sophistication in the information exchanges with the environment and their evaluation would be a mark of higher complexity. This aspect would, for example, characterize higher levels of professionalization. Thus we have included some measures of professional behavior partly as an aid in understanding the complexity of the environment of fleet managers. We shall report on the professionalism results later.

As part of our assessment of perceptions of complexity, managers were asked to respond to the statement, "My job as a fleet manager requires me to deal with a great many outside groups and individuals in my organization's outside environment." Almost three-fourths of the total sample (149, or 74.5 percent) agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. Most respondents (80.5 percent) agreed that "fleet management is a very complicated job." Respondents were evenly split on the relative importance of external and internal factors affecting their job; 36 percent agreed and 36.5 percent disagreed with the statement that "In general, my job is more strongly affected by what happens in the outside world than by what happens inside the organization." Although respondents saw their jobs and the environment as complex, they did not report, on the whole, much difficulty in understanding the environment (57.5 percent agreed that they had little trouble understanding the environment), and 55 percent of them agreed that constant demands keep the job from being as simple as it should be. A large majority of respondents (78 percent) agreed with the statement, "Fifteen years ago, the organization's external environment was much less complex than it is today."

"Objective" turbulence is and will remain a theoretical construct; obviously, the environment of any manager is changing all the time and it would be difficult if not impossible to count accurately the number of actual changes and the speed with which they occurred. What is vitally important, however, is the manager's *perceptions* of environmental change (number and speed of changes) as well as the manager's perceptions of his or her ability to understand and cope with changes in the environment.

Seventy percent of respondents disagreed with the statement, "outside factors that are important to this job really don't change much," and 68 percent agreed that "15 years ago, the organization's external environment was such that it took less expertise to manage the fleet." Clearly, fleet managers perceive their environment to be quite turbulent. They are mixed, however, in their perceived ability to understand and deal with such turbulence: 43 percent agreed that "things change so fast in this work

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"Very few felt their jobs were at a higher level. . ."

that it is hard to keep up-to-date," and 37.5 percent agreed that "the outside environment these days seems almost completely unpredictable."

Besides complexity, questions inquired about the fleet's importance to its organization and respondents' perceptions of how highly valued and understood their function was by other organizational members. Sixty-nine percent of respondents agreed that "this organization could not survive without its fleet," indicating the vital importance of fleet management functions to organizational health. Three questions, however, indicated that fleet management is poorly understood and appreciated by others in the organization: 65 percent agreed that "most people don't realize how important the fleet is to them"; 77.5 percent agreed that "most people in the organization don't understand what fleet management is all about"; and 64 percent agreed that "most people in this organization don't realize that the fleet manager's job is a difficult one." Now, "most people" is a phrase that encompasses a lot of employees who have little or nothing to do with the fleet; it may not be surprising that "most people" in the organization do not understand or value the fleet manager's job. One would expect, however, that senior executives would respect and highly value the fleet management function, but only 46 percent of our respondents agreed with this statement.

Three questions were aimed at discovering fleet management's relative status within the organization. These questions asked respondents to agree or disagree with these statements: "Compared to other managers in this organization with responsibilities similar to mine, my job is at a higher level, my salary is higher, I have greater access to top management." Very few fleet managers felt their jobs were at a higher level (21.5 percent agreed) or that their salaries were higher (10.5 percent agreed). On the third question, however, fully 57.5 percent felt that they had greater access to top management than did their peers with comparable responsibilities. This result could reflect the increasing costs in the area and the increasingly problematic environment in which this important function operates.

It is therefore apparent that at least part of the common folklore of fleet management is shared among fleet managers: the fleet managers themselves feel under-appreciated and poorly understood by peers and superiors even while the key nature of their jobs is requiring greater perceived access to top managers. Of course, we did not direct these questions also to a sample of non-fleet managers, and we cannot know whether *all* managers tend to feel this way. Perceptions of such things as job level and salary of

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"The majority feel they have considerable control."

peers may, however, be based on good information in many organizations; the fleet managers' perceptions could be well-founded.

Professionalism of Fleet Managers

Organization theorists distinguish between occupations and professions on the grounds that the latter encompass a specialized body of knowledge, enjoy some external recognition or certification of professional status (which often requires special training), serve as means for identifying and interacting with peers in other organizational and geographic locations, have a great deal of autonomy, and subscribe to a code of ethics (or norms of service). Overall, fleet managers reported substantial autonomy in making decisions in a variety of fleet areas and clearly indicated a perceived sense of professionalism.

Fully 91 percent agreed that fleet management has a special body of knowledge, and 76 percent agreed that fleet managers must know many things that other managers don't need to know. Fleet managers do tend to have general academic training, mostly in business; we do not, however, have comparable figures for other managers. A great majority (88.5 percent) of respondents had completed some college, and 54.5 percent held undergraduate degrees. Twenty percent had accomplished some graduate-level work or had graduate degrees. Of the 107 college graduates, 51.4 percent earned degrees in business administration or a specialty such as accounting, marketing, or finance. The other degrees ranged very broadly across liberal arts disciplines, social and physical sciences, and professional areas of study.

Almost all respondents keep up with NAFA's newsletter and other NAFA publications (91.2 percent and 89.2 percent, respectively, reported "frequent participation on these two items"), indicating both attention to a possibly specialized body of knowledge and the outreach to one's peers that characterizes professionals. Indeed, respondent fleet managers have a fairly high overall participation level in the activities of NAFA (a possible bias in the sample, of course, since we used the NAFA mailing list). Many respondents are active in other professional associations as well. A substantial minority — about 46 percent in both cases — attend the annual meeting frequently or attend local or regional chapter meetings. Fewer respondents attend special training programs or regional seminars frequently (28.2 percent and 20.9 percent, respectively). Seventy-two percent thought that fleet managers should have special training, but only 37 percent of respondents were neutral or did not answer this question.

The fleet manager's autonomy within the organization was addressed explicitly by asking respondents to agree or disagree with the statement, "I have a great deal of control over..." various aspects of fleet management. It is clear that the majority of respondents feel that they have considerable control over all the important categories of decisions concerning fleet management functions, but that the number of managers with such control decreases considerably in areas having to do with budgeting and capital expenditures. Overall, 66.5 percent of respondents agreed that "as things are now, I feel that I have enough power to make decisions and implement them to administer the fleet effectively."

Norms of service (a concept with the ethical connotation of having a professional responsibility to fulfill some set of obligations) were quite strong among respondent fleet managers. Over 77 percent agreed that "a fleet manager's primary responsibility is to provide service to his or her employer," and 69 percent agreed that "a fleet manager's primary responsibility is to provide service to fleet users." Obviously, neither of these groups — employers and fleet users — are seen as having priority; norms of service apply to both almost equally.

It is thus no wonder that over three-fourths of the sample (76 percent) agreed with the statement, "I wouldn't hesitate to call myself a professional fleet manager." Fleet managers exhibit at least the self-perception of an emerging profession, though support for formal certification seems as yet mixed.

If fleet managers behave as well as look like professionals, we may expect to see some of the behavioral patterns that can characterize professionals in general. Professionalization may help to develop and sustain high levels of service quality. Emphasis on a distinct body of knowledge and special training needs can lead to better preparation for fleet management and support for expansion of the knowledge base. Innovations developed by members of the profession outside a particular organization may be quick to spread the organization through contacts in professional association. Professional norms, apart from the particular reward system in any given organization, can help determine the quality of job performance.

As the academic literature makes clear, however, professionalization can bring problems as well as benefits. Professional ties can sometimes mean excessive independence of the needs of the particular organization in which a practitioner works; there can be a tug-of-war between alliance to the company's policies and to professional prescriptions. Certification can mean both attainment of some level of professional achievement and the discouragement of levels yet higher. It can also mean the creation of entry barriers to aspirants to the profession, much as bar and medical exams limit the number of lawyers and physicians. These may be issues that the emerging profession of fleet management can expect to face in the coming years.

Trends in the Control of Fleets and the Use of Fleet Services

The increasing complexity and other changes in the environment of fleet management have brought with them changes in aspects of the control of fleets and the use of fleet services.